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Friday, January 11, 2013

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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Commissioner records video message on evaluations, SLOs

As we move forward with our first full year of implementation of educator evaluations, we all have been paying close attention to the use of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as part of the evaluation process. From the outset, we decided to use SLOs as part of the evaluation process because we wanted to build our evaluation system on a foundation of multiple measures. We certainly did not and do not want a system that is overly reliant on either classroom observations or standardized test scores. I believe that, in developing SLOs we are respecting that our professional educators working every day in the classroom know their own students, that they have goals that they are working to achieve regarding student outcomes, and that they have ways of evaluating student growth – and we want to incorporate all of these principles into our evaluation system.

No doubt, establishing SLOs is hard to do. It would have been much easier to invest in a series of standardized tests to measure various aspects of student growth and achievement in many subjects and grade levels, but we did not choose to go down that route. We are working through the challenges of implementing

something that has not been standardized, and we all will benefit from this process – especially our students.

As we implement evaluations this year, I have been in close communication with the leadership of both of our state teachers' unions, with the principals' association, and with your association (RISSA) as well regarding the use of evaluations at both the state and local level. As you may have heard, the Providence Public Schools has decided, with our support, that for this year they will not use the SLO component of the evaluations in making employment decisions about teachers.

For this year, the use of evaluations at the local level may vary somewhat across the state, and in order to help you make your decisions about using evaluations regarding employment and other matters, we plan to issue some guidance this month about the use of evaluations at the local level. I have also recorded a video message to all educators, which I hope you will make available to the your staff members, to your principals, and to all teachers in your LEA. We have posted a link to the video here:

<http://youtu.be/q-bvt6cERtU>

We remain committed to using SLOs as part of the evaluation process and to using evaluations first and foremost to support continuous growth and improvement for all of our educators. Our focus now is how to ensure that we implement the evaluation system effectively.

2. Commissioner schedules 2013 school visits

As we enter the second half of the school year, I have begun to schedule a series of visits to schools across the state, which will

give me the opportunity to see some great classroom instruction in progress and to meet with groups of teachers and school leaders. It's always important to me to get input and feedback directly from teachers and students, and I enjoy learning from my visits to classrooms where I can see how some of our teachers and their students are leading the way in teaching and learning!

At each visit, I will sit in on at least one class and then, at the end of the school day, I will meet with the teachers (and staff members) at that school to discuss some of the great work under way in the school and to hear and discuss any concerns teachers may raise about our work toward transforming education. These visits will be closed to the media and to the public. My hope is to meet many Rhode Island students and teachers whom I have not yet spoken with face to face, so most of the schools I will visit this year will be those I have not yet had the opportunity to visit to date. Kim Bright (Kimberly.Bright@ride.ri.gov), from my office, is coordinating the schedule of school visits, and you may be hearing from Kim about these school visit later in the school year.

3. Health Department offers pointers on flu prevention

I hope that that flu has not visited your community and that you, your team, and your students have been in good health. We know, however, that we are experiencing a significant flu outbreak in the Northeast this season. The Department of Health has sent me some pointers on preventing the spread of flu in schools, and I hope you can share this information across your community:

- get everyone immunized (this link <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/vaccination/index.php> will take you to a location of community clinics, including a

recently scheduled school-based clinics. Scroll down to see the list). Parents and children can also be vaccinated at their primary-care doctor, and adults can be vaccinated at many pharmacies (some pharmacies may vaccinate children as well; check with local pharmacies on their policy);

- keep children home if they are sick;
- take children to their doctor when they get sick (encourage parents to have sick children seen as soon as flu symptoms appear. The doctor can prescribe a treatment that will help lessen symptoms and the length of the illness, but treatment must begin within the first 24 hours of feeling sick); and
- wash your hands frequently; regularly wipe down commonly touched surfaces, such as door knobs, cabinet handles, telephones, TV remotes, and video-game controllers; and remember to cough into your elbow!

From RIDE

Action Items:

4. RIDE requests annual listing of textbooks by March 15

Each year, RIDE collects and distributes a list of textbooks used in all public schools in the state. The purpose of this list is to meet the requirements of [General Laws 16-23-2](#) and [16-23-3](#), which provide for the loan of textbooks in mathematics, science, world languages, English-language arts, and history or social studies, grades kindergarten through 12, to nonpublic schools in Rhode Island.

Using the e-RIDE system, LEAs are required to submit to RIDE a complete listing of all textbooks planned for use during the coming (2013-14) school year. The e-RIDE system is an electronic process through which LEAs must manage their textbook lists by adding and deleting titles and other pertinent information.

RIDE will send a memo to all textbook coordinators and data managers requesting them to update, by **March 15**, their complete list of textbooks currently in use. The memo will include instructions for the use of the e-RIDE system, including the details for uploading textbook titles and ISBN numbers, as well as Frequently Asked Questions for Textbook List Management. Once we have received updates from all LEAs, the information will be posted to the RIDE website.

Any inquiries regarding the program should be addressed to Stacy Mello, at 222-8944 or stacy.mello@ride.ri.gov. Technical issues regarding the use of e-RIDE should be directed to helpdesk@ride.ri.gov.

5. SurveyWorks open, schools can begin survey implementation

SurveyWorks began yesterday (January 10). Schools that have completed the necessary training and forms have received their materials from our survey vendor, WestEd. These schools can begin survey implementation.

Schools that have not yet completed the Parental Opt-out and documentation process should do so as soon as possible to ensure they have enough time to implement the survey before March 1. Contact WestEd with any questions, at surveyworks@wested.org or toll-free at 1-877-787-5725.

SurveyWorks is for all schools:

- students in grades 4 through 12;
- parents of students in grades PreK through 12;
- all teachers and instructional staff; and
- all school-based administrators.

We ask that you communicate to your school principals the importance of beginning the SurveyWorks process in a timely manner in order to ensure that schools and districts receive stakeholder feedback data on important issues.

6. Teacher, building administrator, and central office surveys on educator evaluations

RIDE has developed online surveys for teachers, building administrators, and central-office administrators to help collect feedback on the new teacher and building administrator evaluation and support systems being implemented in Rhode Island. This is the first of two sets of surveys RIDE will distribute during the current school year. Feedback collected through the surveys will help us identify the successes and challenges of implementation and will guide continued improvements. All survey responses are confidential and will be shared only in the aggregate.

The deadline for completing the surveys is Monday, **February 4**. The surveys are differentiated for the audience and the specific evaluation system being implemented. We ask you to please share the survey links below with your teachers, building administrators, and central-office administrators.

Teacher Surveys

Teachers using the Rhode Island Model:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Winter13RIModelTeachers>

Teachers in Innovation districts, Coventry, and The Learning Community:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Winter13NonRIModelTeachers>

Building Administrator Surveys

Building Administrators using the Rhode Island Model for both teachers and building administrators:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Winter13RIModelBA>

Building Administrators in Innovation districts, Coventry, and The Learning Community:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Winter13NonRIModelBA>

Central Office Administrator Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Winter13SuperintendentsandAssistantSuperintendents>

Assessments:

7. October 2012 NECAP results reporting workshops announced

In partnership with Measured Progress, RIDE will be conducting two live, in-person reporting workshops next month:

- February 11, from 1 – 3 p.m., at the Radisson Hotel, 2081, Post Rd., Warwick
- February 12, from 9 – 11 a.m., at the Providence Marriott Downtown Hotel, 1 Orms St.

To register, go to:

<http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>

These workshops are designed for principals, superintendents, and any staff members who are directly involved with student data and analysis of results. The workshops will provide a review of the various NECAP reports and support materials and an overview of the Rhode Island Analysis and Reporting System, as well as an introduction to using data and interpreting NECAP results.

The content of these workshops will also be presented in two pre-recorded webinars that will be posted online, at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/Workshops.aspx>, when they become available (sometime after February 14). One webinar will focus on NECAP reports and supporting materials and the other will focus on the NECAP Analysis and Reporting System (the RIDE online, interactive reporting tool).

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov, or 222-8494).

**8. *Reminder:* Deadline to register to participate in the 2013
NECAP Online Writing Pilot is February 1**

RIDE is pleased to announce another opportunity for schools to participate in a NECAP Online Writing Pilot for grades 8 and 11. Following a very successful second year with online writing, we are expanding this pilot program to provide additional schools with the chance to participate.

We believe that moving toward online testing will provide greater fidelity between writing in the classroom and writing for assessment. The pilot test is made up of released items from NECAP writing assessments, and we will use the pilot to confirm the ability of each participating school to participate in the Fall 2013 NECAP Operational Online Writing assessment. The primary purpose of the pilot is to test the ability of our schools to administer an online assessment; therefore, scores from student work will not be returned.

The dates for this school year's Online Writing Pilot are March 25 - 29 and April 1 - 5.

Successful completion of the Spring 2013 pilot qualifies schools for participation in online operational testing in the fall of 2013. *Please note:* If your school has successfully participated in a previous NECAP Online Writing Pilot (Spring 2011 or 2012), you do *not* need to participate in another pilot; however, if you have new staff members and would like to participate in the pilot a second time, you may do so.

If you are interested in having your school participate in the Online Writing Pilot, please e-mail Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov, and request a copy of the information you'll need to determine if your school is eligible for participation.

The deadline for applying for participation in the Online Writing Pilot is **February 1**.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov or 222-8494).

Technology:

9. LEAs urged to participate in Digital Learning Day

Digital Learning Day is a national campaign that celebrates educators and the potential of technology in education. The second national event is taking place on **February 6**. As part of this annual celebration, there will be an online Digital Town Hall meeting at 1 p.m. The Digital Town Hall will celebrate the great work and potential for digital learning happening around the country in a range of districts and schools to ensure that students can graduate from high school prepared for college and a career. The event will be streamed live around the world, building upon the nearly 40,000 sites that tuned in last year. Through online communities, such as epic-ed and social networking sites, virtual and in-person participants can participate in discussions throughout the day. High-profile dignitaries will be showcased as well as three exceptional examples of schools or districts making the successful transition to digital learning. Polling with mobile devices will be used to capture impressions across the United

States, and “clickers” in the audience will add interaction to the event.

We urge you to make plans to host districtwide activities and to encourage teachers in your schools to [sign up today](#) to join tens of thousands of educators in a wave of innovation sweeping across our nation’s schools. Participation is free and open to all interested education leaders. Take a look at <http://www.digitallearningday.org/participate/district-leaders/> for ideas on ways LEAs can participate.

Participation offers a great opportunity to collaborate with tens of thousands of educators across the nation in this massive celebration of the potential of digital learning. There are a lot of great ideas, activities, and toolkits available in the “[ways to participate](#)” and the “[take action](#)” sections of the Digital Learning Day [website](#).

RIDE is planning to support Digital Learning Day with the second annual Rhode Island Digital Conference in the spring. The focus of this year’s conference will continue the conversation begun last year and will continue to explore and share innovative ideas about blended learning and implementation strategies. We will continue to share information about the conference and national information such as Digital Learning Day activities.

10. RIDE announces new features for PARCC Technology Readiness Tool

RIDE is pleased to announce an update to the PARCC Technology Readiness Tool that will include the minimum and recommended requirements for existing and new technology, as well as several enhancements to the tool itself (see the URL below for a link to a

PDF with details). This new functionality will be available on **Monday** (January 14).

Enhancements to be implemented Monday:

www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/DOCS/PARCC/PARCC-TRT_Enhancements_2-2.pdf

As of Monday, any school-level device data that are marked as “required” but that are missing from the tool will be reported as not meeting minimum requirements. New report functionality on the site will help your technology-readiness coordinator to identify where data may be missing or may need revision. Assistant superintendents and curriculum directors have been given access to the PARCC Readiness Tool, and they should have received e-mail confirmation.

The next data snapshot will be taken on February 15 and will be a critical benchmark for PARCC, as well as for LEAs and states, in assessing capacity in preparation for the assessment in School Year 2014-15. All LEAs should make every effort to provide any missing data in the tool before this date.

For more information about the Technology Readiness Tool, please contact Mike Ferry, at 222-8258 or michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov. For Readiness Tool logon credentials, please contact Jessica Murphy, at jessica.murphy@ride.ri.gov.

Training and webinars:

- 11. RIDE releases English Language Learner professional-development schedule**

RIDE is offering professional-development opportunities to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) support to LEAs. This support is designed to build the capacity of educators and administrators to improve the achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs). These training sessions also meet the requirements for ELL professional development for all teachers, as described in R.I.G.L. 16-54-2 sec. L-4-12.

The schedule is posted on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ell/professional-development/>.

The schedule contains dates, times, locations, detailed descriptions of each workshop, and registration instructions. Please ensure that your educators are aware of these training opportunities.

If you have questions about this schedule, please contact Bob Measel (robert.measel@ride.ri.gov or 222-8480), in our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, or Pat Morris (patricia.morris@ride.ri.gov or 222-8413) or Emily Klein (emily.klein@ride.ri.gov or 222-8985), in our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports.

12. New date added in East Bay for required Rhode Island Model - Module 1 training for evaluators

In addition to the Module 1 training sessions for personnel evaluating teachers being offered on Tuesday (January 15) and Friday (January 18) at the West Bay Collaborative, RIDE has added morning and afternoon sessions on February 4 at the Newport Area Career and Technical Center, 15 Wickham Rd., Newport. February 4 is the final time the Module 1 training will be available

for personnel evaluating teachers. The Module 1 training, which has been offered 30 times since late November, has been very well received. On the Module 1 exit survey, 88 percent of participants rated the training as high quality or very high quality.

For additional information about the Edition II Module 1 trainings, including registration directions, please go to the Training Registration page on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>.

Awards:

13. Green Ribbon Schools applications due Tuesday

We were honored that the U.S. Department of Education awarded Green Ribbons to two Rhode Island schools last year (Classical High School and the Nathan Bishop Middle School, both in Providence), recognizing their “comprehensive approach to creating ‘green’ environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education to prepare students with the 21st-century skills and sustainability concepts needed in the growing global economy.” We hope to have a strong slate of nominees this spring for the 2013 Green Ribbon Schools awards. For more information on the Green Ribbon Schools application process, see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/Funding/construction/schoolconstruction.aspx>

Applications are due on **Tuesday** (January 15).

Please Joseph da Silva, our school-construction coordinator, at 222-4294 or joseph.dasilva@ride.ri.gov, if you have any questions about the Green Ribbon School awards.

Evaluations:

14. New Mid-Year Conference worksheets available to support educator evaluations

A new Mid-Year Conference worksheet (in Word) is now available on the RIDE website. The worksheet mirrors the Mid-Year Conference Form in the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS), and the worksheet is intended for evaluators who are not fully using the EPSS. Evaluators fully using the EPSS can access the Mid-Year Conference form on the “My Caseload” tab of the evaluator dashboard. In EPSS, most of the information on the Mid-Year Conference Form will be pre-populated (e.g., classroom observation scores). For additional information about Mid-Year Conferences, including scoring guidance, please reference the Edition II guidebooks.

To access the Mid-Year Conference Form, please go to the Training Resources page on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Training.aspx>.

From other organizations

15. Charter School League schedules two charter-school fairs

The Rhode Island League of Charter Schools has scheduled two 2013 Charter Public School Fairs to provide families with the opportunity to speak with school representatives and to learn more about the League's 15 charter public schools in Rhode Island.

The fairs will be held on:

Tuesday (January 15), from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., at Blackstone Academy Charter School, 334 Pleasant St., Pawtucket

Tuesday, January 29, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., at Times2 Academy, 50 Fillmore St., Providence.

Representatives from these charter public schools will be present at both fairs:

Academy for Career Exploration
Beacon Charter High School for the Arts
The Compass School
Blackstone Academy Charter School
The Green School
Highlander Charter School
International Charter School
Kingston Hill Academy
The Learning Community
NELS/CPS Construction Career Academy
Paul Cuffee School
R.I. Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School
The Segue Institute for Learning
Times2 Academy
Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts

For more information, contact Steve Nardelli, at 831-3700 ext. 114, or stevenardelli@richarterschools.com

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>